Shall Honolulu See King John When Mantell Comes?

ROBERT MANTELL AS KING JOHN.
The large result of great talents and many years of experience, says William Winter, is shown in a noble achievement.

Even Shakespeare can spell novelty for us when one of his little-used plays is given public representation. Mr. Mantell's production of "King John" at the New Amsterdam Theater, New York, is received with gratitude on that score, and with varying comments on others. Mr. Winter calls it the most important dramatic event of the year, and devotes more than two columns to its consideration. Other commentators, such as Mr. Fyles, of The Evening Post, welcome the event "with respect and gratitude," while still others acknowledge it a "commendable enterprise." It is at least an occasion for brushing up one's theatrical history, and here the chroniclers show varying degrees of care. Mr. Winter, whose knowledge of stage lore is unrivaled, names E. L. Davenport as our last representative of the part, and tells us that the American stage has also seen, as King John, Douglas, Cooper, Barry, Junius Brutus Booth (both father and son of that name), Charles Kean, and Hamblin. The dramatic writers of The Sun and The World profess to recall the time when Edwin Booth used to stir his audience in the role, though Mr. Winter says he never assumed it. England has in our day seen the part enacted by both F. R. Benson and Beerbohm Tree, and it is an interesting coincidence that Mr. Tree is planning an early revival in which Miss Ellen Terry will play Constance for the first time. Mr. Winter presents an interesting analysis of the play, in the course of which he says:

"Mr. Mantell manifests a broad comprehension of the whole subject," and enriches the stage "with a Shakespearian figure not less magnificent than true." Dramatic critics in these days infrequently occupy themselves with the question of acting, and hence rarely is so full an analysis of a players' interpretation of a part offered us as the following:

"Mr. Mantell.....endues the miserable sovereign at once with a dangerous personality, a nervous temperament, a disquieted mind, a sinister look, and an impetuous, irascible demeanor—making him a man who, while bold in pretension and expeditious in movement, is, furtively, ill at ease, continually rancorous and capable of evil, and yet, at vital moments, weakly irresolute. His impersonation, accordingly, is all of one piece, so that, when he reaches the King's temptation of Hubert to do a murder, he only fully reveals a nature that he has already indicated. That terrible speech of King John to Hubert—'I had a thing to say'—he speaks in a hollow undertone, placing, however, a distinct, blood-curdling emphasis on the conclusive phrases—'Death'—'A grave!'—and enforcing them with gesture and glance so baleful, and of such fatal meaning, that the observer shudders with horror. The sudden change to grisly exultation, with the words 'I could be merry now!' intensifies that impartment of dread. Indeed, the whole treatment of the temptation scene is admirable for its investiture of wickedness with plausibility, and for its subtle transparency—the suggestion of treachery, cruelty, and hideous crime being made in such a way that Hubert's acceptance of it and compliance with it seem unconstrained and natural. The King's convulsive, clinging grasp of the hand of Philip, when the Cardinal threatens the curse of Rome, is a significant forerunner of that submission which his shifting, irresolute mind will, in its subsequent access of infirmity, make to his spiritual lord, and it is all the more felicitous, as a touch of art, because it follows a splendid burst of passion, in the defiance of the imperious priest.

"A singularly fortunate makeup intensifies every effect of the actor's art Mr. Mantell's King John, when he is first seen, is seen to be a sick man, feverish in body and distrest in mind. The aspect is singular, menacing, almost repulsive, and yet it is attractive—possessing the reptile fascination of the serpent. The face is blanched. The gaze of the cruel blue eyes is sometimes concentrated, cold and stony, sometimes wavering and shifting, as is the habit of self-conscious evil. The lips are full, red, and sensual. The head is crowned with a shock of reddish hair. . . ."

Mr. Winter dwells especially upon the death scene of the King, and comparisons are made with some of the greatest histrionic artists. We read:

"The body of the King, convulsed with pain, is shrunken and withered. His hair and beard are disheveled. His face is ghastly, and, as seen in the flickering light, it gleams with the gathering dew of death. He has thrown aside his rich attire, and is clad in black trunks and long black hose, with a white shirt, torn open at the throat; around his shoulders there is a loose robe. A more piteous spectacle—made awful with mysterious, grim, and weird environment—has not been seen; and Mr. Mantell makes the illusion so complete that the theater is forgotten. The threadlike, gasping, whispering, despairing voice in which he utters the dying speeches of King John—the abject, pitiful supplication that his kingdom's rivers may be allowed to take their course through his burned bosom—can only be heard with tears. If pity and terror be the legitimate object of tragedy—touching the heart and thrilling and exalting the mind—Mr. Mantell, assuredly, has accomplished its object. Wonderful death scenes have, at long intervals, been shown upon our stage; those, for example, of Ristori, in Queen Elizabeth; Davison, in Othello; Edwin Booth, in King Lear; Henry Irving, in King Louis; Salvini in Conrade; the death scene of Robert Mantell's King John is worthy to rank with the best of them. The art of it is superb. The monition of it should sink deep into every heart. To each one of us the hour of death must come—the forlorn, abject isolation from humanity—the awful opening of that dread pathway which every human being must tread alone—the great mystery—the piteous solitude, when mortality breathes its last sigh and murmurs its last farewell."

WHEN ROYALTY HAS TANTRUMS

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria, has been in a temper. Perhaps the ill success of his scheming against Turkey has embittered him; at any rate the Matin declares that he has had a violent dispute with a high palace official. The nature of the quarrel is not stated, but it appears that it ended in blows, and that the police had to intervene, says Pearson's Weekly.

Royalties seem to be getting unpleasantly handy with their fists these days. A story is even going round that our beloved Queen Alexandra has been guilty of assault recently, though it must be admitted that her majesty fought in a good cause.

Her majesty, driving in a pony cart in a quiet lane near Sandringham, came upon a tinker boy ill-treating a dog. She was unattended, and having no one to send to the dog's rescue, she left the trap by the roadside and went herself to rescue the howling animal.

The boy, seeing an unknown lady bearing down upon him in a threatening manner, left off beating the dog. Then the queen, not content with giving him a scathing lecture, brought the interview to an end by giving the dog's persecutor a resounding box on the ear.

Someone has appealed to Princess Victoria to say if the tale is true, but her royal highness has refused to be "drawn." All she will say is: "It is just what my mother would like to do."

The recent death of the Chinese sovereign recalls another historical slap.

The young emperor went to call on his august aunt. He was attired very smartly in garments that might have been cut in Saville Row, an outrage against Oriental tradition that was more than the old dowager empress could stand. In an outburst of fury she covered the reforming emperor with bitter reproaches, and snatching up her fan, she enforced her remarks by dealing him a vicious blow on the cheek.

An incident that occurred in connection with the recent Greek army maneuvers resulted in the crown prince losing his temper and two railway officials getting themselves arrested.

The prince had ordered a special train to be prepared at once. This was done, but before the railway officials would allow the crown prince to start they insisted on the special train being paid for. The prince flew into a passion, ordered the officials to be arrested, and himself commanded the driver to proceed.

Another crown prince, he of Germany, wanted to put up at a certain hotel. The manager explained that his hotel was full, and respectfully declined to admit the imperial party. His highness's "carryings on were something scand'lous!"

The question of women's rights always roused the ire of the late Queen Victoria. When she heard that a certain Lady —— had been making a public speech in favor of votes for women the queen wrote this indignant note in the third person:

"Lady —— ought to get a good whipping. It is a subject that makes the queen so furious that she cannot contain herself."

King Victoria Emmanuel is very "touchy" on the subject of his shortness of stature. One day, when he was out motoring, the car broke down. The king left the car to watch the mechanic, and very soon a crowd gathered.

A woman asked: "Which is the king?" and on his majesty being pointed out to her, she gasped out in horror: "What! That little, tiny man there!"

The spectators tittered. The king, his face purple with fury, jumped into the car and sat there scowling until the car started again.

The kaiser does not often get in a temper, but even when he does his sense of humor often gets the better of him.

A short time ago he summoned Baron Boettieher, the secretary of state for the interior, and gave him the name of a man to whom he wished a certain appointment to be given. The baron protested that the man was entirely unsuited for the post, and in spite of the emperor's growing irritation he put forward the convincing proof of the man's unsuitability. He then asked if there was anyone else on whom his majesty would like to confer the appointment.

"Oh, confer it on Satan if you like!"

The minister bowed to conceal a smile.

"And shall I, then," he asked, blandly, "issue the patent to be signed by your majesty in the usual form, 'To my trusted and well beloved cousin and councillor?'"